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FUSARIUM BLIGHT ON BLUEGRASS FAIRWAYS

Fusarium blight has been a severe problem on my Kentucky bluegrass fairways for the last two years. It has not damaged large areas of turf, but has consistently blemished our fairways during hot, dry weather. Fusarium blight is becoming more severe each year and shows up earlier in the season each year. When I first noticed the disease four years ago it was present on only two fairways on south slopes. It has now spread to every fairway on the course with the heaviest damage on the higher and drier areas.

My attempts at controlling Fusarium blight have been only marginal at times and good at other times. I have been using Tersan 1991 as a chemical control and heavy watering as a cultural practice. My intention has been to limit the extent of damage rather than total control due to the cost involved. In 1975 I used no chemical control for Fusarium as the disease was only active in small areas on a few fairways. Heavier than normal watering did minimize the damage. In 1976 the wilt symptoms of the disease were evident the first week in June despite good rainfall. Tersan 1991 was applied at a 5 oz. per M rate on nine of the most affected fairways. In treating nine fairways 216 lbs. of material was used at a cost of \$2,130 or about \$130 per acre. The application was made in the evening and watered in before the material dried on the grass blades. The disease did not progress past the wilt stage except in some areas where the irrigation system did not cover well. The untreated fairways continued to show wilt and damage as the disease continued to develop over a two week period. Changing weather conditions then stopped disease development, but wilting was still present on the untreated fairways in the afternoons. At this point I was pleased with the results from the 1991 application, but I didn't know how long the control would last because disease activity subsided after two weeks. In July wilt symptoms and damage again showed up and by the middle of July with higher temperatures and drier weather Fusarium activity began picking up. Areas that had been showing wilt were now being damaged severely. At this time another 5 oz. application of 1991 was made to the same nine fairways and watered in heavily. The results were disappointing in that damage continued and when comparing treated areas with untreated areas I could find little difference. The second application exhausted my chemical supply so no further applications were made in 1976. I continued with the heavy irrigation and managed to hold the damage down to about 10% in most areas. The only explanation I can offer for the poor control from the second application is that the disease had advanced beyond the wilt stage when the application was made.

In 1977 I anticipated increased Fusarium blight activity, but I didn't anticipate this activity in the middle of May. On May 1 Tersan 1991 was applied at a 5 oz. rate to seven fairways that were showing severe wilt symptoms. The application was watered heavy in the evening and again in the morning. Within a week the treated fairways were showing much less wilt than the untreated fairways. By the end of the second week it was evident that we were getting disease control as the untreated fairways began to show damage, while the treated fairways continued to show some wilt only. The fungicide seemed to control the Fusarium for a 3 to 4 week period before some damage showed up on the treated fairways. Heavy irrigation was used on all the fairways and did minimize the damage on the untreated fairways.

To summarize, Tersan 1991 did control Fusarium blight at a 5 oz. per M rate if it is applied when early wilt shows. Control seemed to last 3 to 4 weeks, but changing weather conditions made it difficult to determine how long we were getting control. Heavy and frequent irrigation is required even if a fungicide is used. However, the heavy irrigation is causing significant increases in our Poa population. In the past four years Fusarium blight has progressed from a minor disease problem to a major problem and it appears earlier in the season each year. In my opinion it is not feasible to chemically control Fusarium on fairways for an entire season as the cost would be staggering. If control was required through July and August only, a fungicide program should be considered. Resistant grass varieties seem to be the only real solution to Fusarium blight on my course. In the May, 1977 issue of Weeds, Trees and Turf there is an article entitled Reflections on Fusarium Blight by Dr. Richard W. Smiley that is very informative.

Credit - Ind. G.C. Supt. Assoc.
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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

YOU DON'T buy a newspaper - you buy news.
YOU DON'T buy life insurance - you buy security for others.
YOU DON'T buy flowers - you buy sentiment and service.
YOU DON'T buy eyeglasses - you buy vision.
YOU DON'T buy awnings - you buy shade.
YOU DON'T buy membership in your Association - you buy cooperation of the ablest men in the turf management profession with whom you can join hands to do things that you can't accomplish alone.
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Illinois State Florists' Association Bulletin

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AMERICANS ALL ...

This Anniversary (of our independence) animates and gladdens all Americans hearts. On other days of the year we may be party men, indulging in controversies more or less important to public good. We may have likes and dislikes, and we may maintain our political differences, often with warm, and sometimes with angry feelings. But today we are Americans all; nothing but Americans.—DANIAL WEBSTER, address delivered July 4, 1851, at the cornerstone laying of the new wing of the Capitol.

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